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SOURCE Ta-hsueh P'ing-lun.HISTORY OF LAND REFORM IN LUNG-YEN

Lung-Yen Hsien (Ueda, 14876, 2551), in Fukien was a Communist stronghold for years and was well known as the "Red Capital." Because this hsien had been initiated into land reform by the Communists, the Fukien government (Nationalist) marked it off as a model area for trying private farm tilling. Private tilling throughout means non-tenant, personal tilling. Since "land reform" is now being discussed so widely, the writer will summarize the history and effect of land reform in Lung-yen.

Lung-yen is situated in the western part of Fukien where hill land predominates. In the whole hsien there are only about 46,000 acres of arable land. If this were divided equally among the 141,000 persons in the hsien, there would be only one mou, or about one-third of an acre for each person. Before 1929, occupations were as follows:

	Population (in percent)	Land (in percent)
Tenants	43	10
Half owner-half tenant	34	29
Rich farmers	12	17
Small owners	7	16
Medium owners	1	17
Large owners	1	10
	<u>98</u>	<u>99</u>

At that time, land rent [payable by the tenant] was 50 percent of the principal crop, and in some cases 60 or 70 percent. Most farmers were in the high-rent, high-interest brackets (at that time high interest was reckoned in produce, the principal doubling in 3 months), living all their lives impoverished through exploitation. So the land problem here, as throughout the nation, urgently awaited solution.

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In the summer of 1929, the Communists invaded western Fukien from Kiangsi. They initiated their land reform in Lung-yen, carrying out a scheme of dividing arable land, confiscating the ancestral shrine holdings of landlords and rich farmers and other privately owned land, instituting a division of land according to the census, using a district or village as a unit, and collecting a progressive land tax. In the 3 years of their control, all the land was distributed except in the districts of Shih-chung, Fu-su, and Wan-an. But at that time there was no survey or standard of apportionment; each village had a different area and population, and sometimes the amount of land received varied as much as several fold. The fiercer class-conflicts aroused antagonism among the landlords and rich farmers, resulting in no satisfactory settlement of the land question; on the contrary, there was a decline in farm productivity, and some of the more remote farm lands lay sterile.

In the early fall of 1932, the Nineteenth Route Army entered Fukien, set up a People's Revolutionary Government and joined hands with the Communists in Lung-yen. The Communist West Fukien Rehabilitation Committee proceeded to confiscate all the land, redistributing it to the whole population by district or village without reference to class, with a readjustment each year, taking into account births and deaths. They imposed a land tax of 30 percent over the entire hsien, with a further levy of 20 percent for public expenses. But at that time there was still no survey or standard of distribution. Consequently, failure to report was very common, distribution was uneven, and the land question still could not be genuinely solved. At the same time, because the Nineteenth Route Army and the Communists were not quite amicably united, nothing was done about irrigation and intelligent cultivation.

After the People's Government fell and Nationalist troops recovered Lung-yen, the Nationalists seeing that Communist land policy had by no means solved the land question fairly, organized a Rural Restoration Committee in 1935 to handle the recording of surrendered rights and to restore former ownership. However, after several years' efforts, except for restoration in Shih-chung, Ch'i-k'ou, and Pai-sha, ownership had been so thoroughly destroyed in all other districts that most owners could not recover possession. At that time, most farmers hesitated or were loath to pay rent in addition to taxes; or else they postponed payment of land rent. The landlords, anxious to recover their lost rights, even pressed for payment of previous rent. By their advantageous position or private penalties they forced payments or falsely accused the recalcitrants as traitors of an alien party. The farmers were driven into more lawlessness and there was much unrest; the weak just eked out an existence, the strong were bolder and took risks; the moderates put up organized opposition. All told, the land controversy grew more and more serious.

Consequently, at the first hsien conference in June 1940, a scheme of land adjustment was proposed, namely, that the government should redeem all land that was in dispute with 20 percent cash and 80 percent bonds, and reinstate the tenants as state tenants to preserve the existing status until a thorough adjustment could be made by a census-guided distribution. This proposal was approved by the administrative conference; but because a few landlords opposed it, and because of changes in personnel, it was not carried out. The old problem was not settled and the new problems caused dispute, so matters got worse.

When Liu Chien-shu (840, 3006, 8912) succeeded Chien-i (12864, 516) as governor, he gave much attention to farm policy, especially the Lung-yen problem, where "reform" had already taken place. He at once designated Lung-yen as a model area for promoting private tilling, and in 1942 marked it off as a land administration experimental precinct. Lin Shih-tan was sent there as magistrate and concurrently officer in charge of this project.

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In June of that year, a survey of land economy was undertaken and finished by the end of the year. Then a prospectus of the project was prepared for submission to the provincial authorities. In January of the following year (1943), the provincial assembly passed the "Provisional Plan for Promoting Private Tilling in Fukien Province," and provided that the Lung-yen project should be put into effect in March. Funds were provided and a land title adjustment office was set up. Tu Chien-Ch'en (2502, 843, 9596) was appointed assistant administrator to push the work forward.

Lung-yen Hsien at first had 29 districts which were now reduced to 19. The project was allowed 2 years for completion in five stages; actual conditions rendered necessary an extension of 4 years, making a total of 6 years, the period expiring in 1948.

Lung-yen chose the direct method of promoting private tilling, namely, for the government to buy up within a fixed period all privately owned land for rationed sale to farmers for private tilling. When each stage began, first an announcement would be made in each district and subdistrict, and for a month in the newspapers, giving a time limit for all title-holders to report as a basis for remuneration. Next, agents would be sent to a district or subdistrict with maps and registers of population, gathering the farmers for a spot investigation of land prices and rents in the last 2 years, and a discussion of soil, water resources, topography, communications, and other conditions, to fix a preliminary price range, which would be submitted for inspection to an assembly of the entire subdistrict. Then an estimated land-value chart would be prepared and submitted to the district price-discussion committee. This chart would then be reported to the county authorities for approval and legal public authentication. After this, the county government in conjunction with the title office would notify landowners to sign receipts and land registers in duplicate, and take these within a fixed period to the Farmers' Bank for payment. Failure to collect on time would result in a follow-up notice and the money being left in the bank at interest.

The entire amount of land redeemed by the county (exclusive of 5,831.58 shih mou /one shih mou is about one-sixth of an acre/ reserved as public land and school land, 47,276 held in litigation over county boundaries, and 132.65 in private disputes) was 262,458 shih mou of arable land. This amount, reduced to standard mou for rationing, equals 485,408.01 shih mou /the author probably means standard mou/.

The land price allowed in each district and subdistrict was reckoned in goods equal in value at the time, because of the wartime depreciation of the currency; the highest exchange rate was 500 shih-chin /one shih-chin is approximately 1 1/3 pound/, the lowest was eight shih-chin.

Owners generally disliked the government's buying up all private land, because of low prices with wide variation and depreciated currency and because payment was in installments with 50-70 percent being carried in notes. In the first and second stages, there were not many who reported ownership; those who went to get payment were still fewer. In the third stage, the Lung-men district promotion committee suggested an improvement, namely, that farmers should first apply for farm land, and the government should issue land-use certificates. With these certificates they might within 3 months arrange a deal with the owners, matching the certificate against the deed, and getting permission to equate the purchase price with the redemption price. If a deal could not be arranged within the time limit, the farmer could pay the government and take possession. This measure was approved by the hsien and then by the provincial heads. Thus owner and tenant could make a direct deal, paying in rice or grain at the current price, or the corresponding amount in currency. This plan was adopted and worked well. In only a few cases was the price so exorbitant that purchase was made from the government.

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After the land was redeemed, it was offered for rationed sale, first to the actual users who drew tickets by hamlet. Local people went forward to receive their tickets, while their names were entered in the land and population register. Then agents consulted with heads of 100-family and 10-family groups, checking the above lists and making corrections. Land that produced in an ordinary year two shih-tan (one shih-tan equals approximately 133 pounds) of rice was defined to be a standard mou for rationing. In the very best land one shih mou could be reckoned as 3.15 standard mou, taking into account soil, water resources, productivity, etc. The distribution of land and population throughout a district considered the amount of land necessary to maintain a living for four persons in a family was estimated, and the farmland increased or diminished according to the number of persons. Each family would fill in an application and guarantee for the proper amount of rationed land. This application would be sent to the county office for approval; then the applicant could buy directly from the owner. Those who could not pay could sign a contract for installments, payable at harvest time with the unpaid balance bearing interest. Those who made one payment in full were given a certificate of ownership by the government as proof of the right to control and use; those who paid in installments were first given a certificate showing the right of use, and when payments were completed, a paper showing ownership. In the fifth stage, those who had paid rent continuously for 4 years were considered to have paid in full.

In the fifth stage, many ownerships had not been broken, and the owners were allowed in accord with real conditions to apply to keep a portion of land for their own private tilling according to the number of persons. The total acreage thus reserved was 79,129 shih mou. Owners of ancestral shrines, who under the pretext of contributing to schools, made secret agreements with tenants for mutual favors and continued to collect land rent, were limited by the provincial government as follows: they were allowed to keep land producing up to 80-shih-tan of grain for private or people's schools - lower primary grade, or up to 105 shih-tan for full elementary private schools.

Generally the subdistrict (pao, group of 100 families) was taken as the unit. After fields for public schools, were reserved all the remaining land would be distributed among the inhabitants. In a few cases, the village was used as the unit, or the land divided solely among farmers in the subdistrict. Generally speaking, the former pattern was preserved, with merely a portion of equalization as to amount. Because of differences of quantity in land and in numbers of people, the allotment to each person varied from place to place. For instance, in Tung-chuen Pao of Pai-t'u township each person received three mou of land, while in Ch'i-ton, Ch'i-pa, Ts'ai-yuan, Kuei-yuan, and other pao each person received only about half a mou; in P'ei-jau Pao of Tzu-chiang township each person received more than three mou, while in Hsia-yang Pao each person received only eight tenths of a mou; in P'u-chiang where land is plentiful and people are few each person could have more than 6 mou. Taking the district as a unit, the per capita allowance throughout the hsien was officially reported as follows:

<u>District</u>	<u>Allowance (in shih mou)</u>
Pai-t'ai	1.46
Tzu-kang	1.31
Hsi-tun	0.94 (smallest)
Tsao-p'u	1.02
Hsin-lo	1.19
T'ung-chiang	2.75
Lung-men	1.1
Ta-ch'ih	2.84
Hsiao-ch'ih	2.15
P'ing-tieh	1.53

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District (Contd)Allowance

Wei-shan	4.27
Ch'ing-ho	2.43
Yen-shih	1.85
Shih-chung	1.81
Hsiang-ho	3.39
Mei-ho	2.28
Pai-sha	2.41
Ch'i-k'ou	4.26
Wu-hsin	4.13

According to the provincial provisional plan and the hsien regulations, when a private tilling farmer died, inheritance was restricted to one who could till privately: the land could not be rented out or sold. Again, privately tilled land could not be divided, or allowed to lie fallow, or put to some other use. Nor could it be hypothecated, except to the Farmers' Bank as security for a loan. Laws concerning which there were violations of any of the above regulations or for which there was no heir could be redeemed by the county authorities and sold to some farmer, who held no property, to cultivate.

Now there has been a general distribution of land to farmers throughout the country. But because of overtaxation some hill land is still lying waste; for instance, in Ch'i-k'ou district there remain 776 shih mou of poor hill land, and in Wu-hsin district 2,253 shih mou, which no one has taken to cultivate. If the government is willing to lighten taxes, there is yet more arable land which the farmers can take.

Since Lung-yen began the promotion of private tilling, problems of land quarrels have lessened day by day. That is, many past errors of land registration and population lists have been rectified under this system of "land must match people, people must receive land," making the registers and lists correspond.

Cases where remote hill land escaped survey have been quietly ferreted out by the farmers because of the rationing of land rights; and national revenue has been thereby increased. Farmers owning land which they till themselves, from now on will have more disposition to take care of it; after a few years of careful cultivation they will certainly be able to increase production. Furthermore, since they will no longer have to pay rent, and if, after paying off the loan in the next few years, they are not burdened with increased taxation, their livelihood should be very greatly improved.

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